

**CLAIMS**

What is claimed is:

1. A mobile satellite telecommunications system, comprising:

at least one user terminal;

at least one satellite in earth orbit; and

at least one gateway bidirectionally coupled to a data communications network;

said user terminal comprising a controller responsive to at least one criterion having been met for activating an indicator for informing a user of a potential for reduced user terminal performance.

2. A mobile satellite telecommunications system as in claim 1, wherein said at least one criterion is comprised of a number of satellites through which a communication between the user terminal and the gateway is conducted.

3. A mobile satellite telecommunications system as in claim 1, wherein said at least one criterion is comprised of an occurrence of there being only one satellite through which a communication between the user terminal and the gateway is conducted.

4. A mobile satellite telecommunications system as in claim 1, wherein said at least one criterion is comprised of a prediction of an occurrence of there being only one satellite through which a communication between the user terminal and the gateway is conducted.

5. A mobile satellite telecommunications system as in claim 1, wherein said at least one criterion is comprised of an occurrence of there being only one satellite

through which a communication between the user terminal and the gateway is conducted, and a further occurrence of an elevation angle between said one satellite and said user terminal falling below a minimum threshold value.

6. A mobile satellite telecommunications system as in claim 1, wherein said at least one criterion is comprised of an occurrence of there being only one satellite through which a communication between the user terminal and the gateway is conducted, and a further occurrence of a signal strength or a signal quality of a link between said one satellite and said user terminal falling below a minimum threshold value.

7. A mobile satellite telecommunications system as in claim 1, wherein said at least one criterion is comprised of an occurrence of there being only one satellite through which a communication between the user terminal and the gateway is conducted, a further occurrence of an elevation angle between said one satellite and said user terminal falling below a minimum threshold value, and a further occurrence of a signal strength or a signal quality of a link between said one satellite and said user terminal falling below a minimum threshold value.

8. A mobile satellite telecommunications system as in claim 1, wherein said user terminal is responsive to received pilot channel signals for detecting a number of satellites through which a communication between the user terminal and the gateway is conducted.

9. A mobile satellite telecommunications system as in claim 1, wherein said indicator is comprised of at least one of a visual indicator, a tactile indicator and an audible indicator.

10. A mobile satellite telecommunications system, comprising:

at least one user terminal;

at least one satellite in earth orbit; and

at least one gateway bidirectionally coupled to a data communications network;

said user terminal comprising a controller responsive to a receipt of a message from said gateway, indicating that at least one criterion has been met, for activating an indicator for informing a user of a potential for reduced user terminal performance.

11. A mobile satellite telecommunications system as in claim 10, wherein said at least one criterion is comprised of a number of satellites through which a communication between the user terminal and the gateway is conducted.

12. A mobile satellite telecommunications system as in claim 10, wherein said at least one criterion is comprised of an occurrence of there being only one satellite through which a communication between the user terminal and the gateway is conducted.

13. A mobile satellite telecommunications system as in claim 10, wherein said at least one criterion is comprised of a prediction of an occurrence of there being only one satellite through which a communication between the user terminal and the gateway is conducted.

14. A mobile satellite telecommunications system as in claim 10, wherein said at least one criterion is comprised of an occurrence of there being only one satellite through which a communication between the user terminal and the gateway is conducted, and a further occurrence of an elevation angle between said one satellite and said user terminal falling below a minimum threshold value.

15. A mobile satellite telecommunications system as in claim 10, wherein said at least one criterion is comprised of an occurrence of there being only one satellite through which a communication between the user terminal and the gateway is

conducted, and a further occurrence of a signal strength or a signal quality of a link between said one satellite and said user terminal falling below a minimum threshold value.

16. A mobile satellite telecommunications system as in claim 10, wherein said at least one criterion is comprised of an occurrence of there being only one satellite through which a communication between the user terminal and the gateway is conducted, a further occurrence of an elevation angle between said one satellite and said user terminal falling below a minimum threshold value, and a further occurrence of a signal strength or a signal quality of a link between said one satellite and said user terminal falling below a minimum threshold value.

17. A mobile satellite telecommunications system as in claim 10, wherein said user terminal is responsive to received pilot channel signals for detecting a number of satellites through which a communication between the user terminal and the gateway is conducted, and for transmitting information indicative of the number of satellites to said gateway.

18. A mobile satellite telecommunications system as in claim 10, wherein said indicator is comprised of at least one of a visual indicator, a tactile indicator and an audible indicator.

19. A method for operating a mobile satellite telecommunications system, comprising:

providing at least one user terminal, at least one satellite in earth orbit, and at least one gateway bidirectionally coupled to a data communications network;

determining that at least one criterion has been met; and

activating an indicator of said user terminal for informing a user of a potential for reduced user terminal performance.

20. A method as in claim 19, wherein said at least one criterion is comprised of a number of satellites through which a communication between the user terminal and the gateway is conducted.

21. A method as in claim 19, wherein said at least one criterion is comprised of an occurrence of there being only one satellite through which a communication between the user terminal and the gateway is conducted.

22. A method as in claim 19, wherein said at least one criterion is comprised of a prediction of an occurrence of there being only one satellite through which a communication between the user terminal and the gateway is conducted.

23. A method as in claim 19, wherein said at least one criterion is comprised of an occurrence of there being only one satellite through which a communication between the user terminal and the gateway is conducted, and a further occurrence of an elevation angle between said one satellite and said user terminal falling below a minimum threshold value.

24. A method as in claim 19, wherein said at least one criterion is comprised of an occurrence of there being only one satellite through which a communication between the user terminal and the gateway is conducted, and a further occurrence of a signal strength or a signal quality of a link between said one satellite and said user terminal falling below a minimum threshold value.

25. A method as in claim 19, wherein said at least one criterion is comprised of an occurrence of there being only one satellite through which a communication between the user terminal and the gateway is conducted, a further occurrence of an elevation angle between said one satellite and said user terminal falling below a minimum threshold value, and a further occurrence of a signal strength or a signal quality of a link between said one satellite and said user terminal falling below a minimum threshold value.

26. A method as in claim 19, wherein said user terminal is responsive to received pilot channel signals for detecting a number of satellites through which a communication between the user terminal and the gateway is conducted.

27. A method as in claim 19, wherein said indicator is comprised of at least one of a visual indicator, a tactile indicator and an audible indicator.

28. A method as in claim 19, wherein said determination is made in said user terminal.

29. A method as in claim 19, wherein said determination is made in said gateway.

30. A method as in claim 19, wherein said determination is made in said gateway based at least in part on information transmitted to said gateway from said user terminal.

31. A method as in claim 19, wherein the indicator is activated to indicate a potential to drop a call.